

Sunrise Learning About Movements, or, SLAM!

by Sunrise Middlebury

SLAM Summary: SLAM is a study group program designed for those interested in Sunrise, social movements, and stimulating change (aka you!!). The information laid out below makes it sound much more official than it actually is, but we wanted to legitimize our thoughts and make sure everyone understands exactly what we aim to do. These weekly meetings are really just a way to come together as a hub and ground us in strong foundational knowledge moving into the spring semester. SLAM hopes to provide a little bit of extra structure and nerdy fun to your JTerm and is a great excuse to meet and see all of your beautiful faces!

Participation: Though we would love to see everyone at every meeting, we know that's a big commitment and are more than happy for people to attend whatever weeks they are available. Additionally, please don't feel discouraged from coming to the meetings if you're unable to read all the material for the week. Though we don't wish to promote the leaching of intellectual property off of those who have put in effort to thoroughly read these texts, we believe it's important to learn as much as you can and sometimes that is best accomplished by being an attentive listener to discussions and contributing any previous knowledge you may have on the module's topic. We've also tried to highlight and summarize key texts in the syllabus, so hopefully that helps you make a choice when deciding what to read with your limited time.

Materials: The materials and references outlined in the syllabus below are just an assemblage of recommendations and are not crucial for the exploration of these topics nor do they necessarily provide a complete look into the history and modern execution of social movements, but we hope they provide a good jumping off point. We did our best to source references available to everyone either through direct links included in the syllabus or pdf copies placed in the shared Google folder. Books are the most challenging medium to get a hold of, especially given the circumstances surrounding the novel coronavirus. Please don't feel pressure to purchase these materials if you are not able and excited to do so. Additionally, please reach out if you need help securing these materials and hopefully those that already have them will find a way to share, but also let's not focus on these readings during discussion as not everyone has accessed them.

DECOLONIZING this syllabus is very important to us. We recognize that these sources are not an accurate representation of the whole of social movement theory or history. When compiling this syllabus we pulled on sources from classes and other movement spaces while doing our best to explore an array of racial and socio-economic backgrounds, understanding that what we have been exposed to is a small slice of all the resources and thought out there.

We want to invite you into this process with us and help us to find sources we didn't know we needed! If you have recommendations or concerns please reach out to us.

Meeting Times + Structure: Meetings are currently set for *every Friday at 4pm EST // 1pm PST* starting on January 8th and concluding February 5th. In this SLAM reboot, we only have one week to get through modules so there's less time to really unpack this material. That being said, we will be extending the meetings to run an additional half hour longer than in the summer for those who are able to stay. Facilitators will structure the meeting to ensure that those who have to leave after an hour, leave at a good concluding point, but those who have the time will enjoy some additional conversation. As a general rule of thumb, this is your study group, so the time is what you make of it!

Communications: We're partial to Slack, so here are the three different channels you can join in order to stay up to date and interact with fellow study group-ers:

#slam-general

SLAM General is where we will post zoom links and share important information like changes to the syllabus, facilitators for the week, etc.

#slam-share

SLAM Share is the perfect place to add additional articles or post discussion questions and thoughts you weren't able to share during our meeting times. Please share thoughts, questions, and content (books, articles, podcasts, poetry, memes, etc.)!

#slam-care

SLAM Care is where we can look out for one another. Struggling with material or overwhelmed by the intensity of the problem? Reach out here to relieve your frustration/confusion and find the support you need.

Modular Course Outline:

Week 1: Setting the Scene — Manifestations of the Climate Crisis

Week 2: (Dis)Possession and Isms

Week 3: Critiques of Capitalism and Alternatives

Week 4: Social Movement Success

Week 5: Hope and Solutions

Further Exploration

Helpful Links:

[Agendas](#) + [Notes](#)

A SLAMMIN' Syllabus:

WEEK 1: Setting the Scene — Manifestations of the Climate Crisis 8 January 2021 at 4 pm ET/ 1pm PT

Welcome to J-Term SLAM! In this first week, we will explore the ways in which the climate crisis has manifested itself in issues beyond just the (also very important) scientific repercussions of climate change. We will spend some time examining the ties between the environment and the current COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, we will look at issues of environmental justice, including the case of Warren County, NC. We will continue to explore deeply rooted environmental injustices found globally by further examining food deserts, water access, and air pollution. Finally, we will touch upon exploitation problems and the dangers of environmental activism. So...the information this week is all over the map! However, our goal is to give you a solid foundation for much of the information to come in the coming weeks. We hope this material can get you thinking about the interconnectedness of the environmental movement to other important social causes. Come ready to share your thoughts!

MATERIALS:

1. Principles of Environmental Justice (EJ)

[The Principles of Environmental Justice](#) from the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit

What is environmental justice? Here are a set of seventeen principles developed by BIPOC at the People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit that guide the environmental justice movement.

[Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States](#), Wells pp. 142-148

This article outlines the connection between environmental justice and waste disposal and cites notable historical examples, such as Warren County, NC. The United Church of Christ's findings in their report illustrate the severity of these problems.

2. Food Deserts

[Food Deserts](#)

The Food Empowerment Project defines food deserts and the communities that are most affected. Furthermore, the article discusses important solutions and avoiding the long-term consequences of unequal access to healthy food.

Map: [Food Access Research Access](#)

This map presents data that tracks access to food across the US based on several indicators of food access.

3. Wealth and Exploitation

Book excerpt: [To Cook a Continent](#) by Nnimo Bassey pp.2-12:

This excerpt from Bassey's book provides a look into the extraction of oil and natural resources occurring globally. In this first chapter, Bassey describes the gas flares on the Niger Delta and details the repercussions of over extraction and extreme exploitation of resources in Africa.

4. Water Access

[Clean Water and the Environmental Justice Movement](#) by Lauren Berg

This article details the disproportionate access to clean water by communities of color in the United States. Berg outlines cases of injustice such as Flint, Michigan and calls on the government to act to make equal water access a priority in the government.

5. Air Pollution/EJ in the Government

[Administration Joins Fight for 'Environmental Justice' Pollution](#), Wells pp. 188-193, 253

These two documents outline the struggle between residents and the lack of visibility issues of environmental justice have gotten at the federal level, despite some hope expressed for the Clinton administration at the time of the article's passage. The second document shows someone wearing a shirt that brings attention to air pollution disproportionately affecting California residents.

6. DAPL

[Meme, Unlicensed #DAPL Guards Attacked Water Protectors with Dogs and Pepper Spray](#), Wells pp. 254-7

These articles address the atrocities committed towards indigenous populations at Standing Rock.

7. Dangers activists face

[Podcast](#) (8 min)

Transcript: ['Our wealth is the forest': Indigenous tribes are the last best hope for the Amazon](#)

This podcast and corresponding transcript details dangers to indigenous environmentalists who are defending their land in Brazil and trying to mitigate the effects of Amazonian deforestation on climate change.

8. COVID

[Coronavirus and Climate Change](#) with Dr. Aaron Bernstein

Dr. Aaron Bernstein addresses a number of concerns regarding both the current pandemic and climate change, including the role of air pollution and potential outbreaks in the future.

**All Wells readings can be found using [this link](#).

WEEK 2: (Dis)Possession and Isms

15 January at 4pm ET/ 1pm PT

Now that we have rooted ourselves in the moment and the various manifestations of climate change, we must ask ourselves how we got here. Most of us get the gist of the greenhouse effect (if not, watch this video) but what propelled us to this state? What caused the issues we are facing today? This week we will discuss different isms as the story of human (dis)possession, the drivers of global climate change, and the underlying story of suffering — or not. Next week will build upon this conversation to examine the role of capitalism in specific, but we must first lay down a foundational understanding of the different systems of taking and economic persistence.

After reviewing these materials you should have a good understanding of dispossession, extractivism, imperialism, capitalism, neoliberalism, socialism, communism, and marxism. This foundation will catapult us into a deeper (and more human) exploration of the evils of capitalism and alternatives. This week is the time to ask questions. Beyond just an exploration of how this all came to be, feel free to voice what you find confusing: What is still unclear about how *insert term here* works? What remains confusing?

MATERIALS:

1. Dispossession

[The Invasion of America](#)

How were 1.5 billion acres of land stolen so rapidly? This video and accompanying article show how territory after territory was tacked onto the union, chronicling the circumstances and bloodshed under which it all happened. This is a sterile history of Native American dispossession highlighting the systematic and inconsequential taking of land.

[Dancing the World Into Being with Idle No More's Leanne Simson](#) by

Naomi Klein (focus on the section “On Extractivism” if short on time)

Naomi Klein interviews writer, spoken word artist, and indigenous academic, Leanne Simson, about extractivism, the importance of talking about the memories of land, and what's next for Idle No More — Indigenous protests rooted in Canada circa 2012.

2. Isms

[On Imperialism in the Revolutionary Marxist Dictionary](#)

Explore different definitions of Imperialism reading as many entries as you feel necessary. [IMPERIAL PRESIDENCY to IMPERIALISTS — Racist Attitudes Of]

[Capitalism: Its Characteristics, Pros, Cons](#)

What is capitalism? How does it compare to other economic systems fundamentally?

[Socialism 101 - The Basics](#)

What is socialism? What isn't socialism? I encourage poking around the Frequently Asked Questions, but not essential!

[The Difference Between Socialism, Communism, and Marxism Explained by a Marxist](#) (12 min video)

3. Bonus Wrap Up!

[Neoliberalism — The ideology at the root of all our problems](#) by George Monboit

What is neoliberalism? This shares the basic characteristics of neoliberalism, outlines how it has precipitated financial disaster, environmental crisis, Trump, etc., and poses the questions: Why has the left failed to propose an alternative? and why can't we expect change until there is one?

[Examining the Wreckage](#) by Nick Estes and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

Estes and Dunbar-Ortiz explore settler colonialism and racial capitalism, their roots in Europe, and modern manifestations in the US. What can historic Black and Indigenous resistance to these systems teach us about living today?

WEEK 3: Critiques of Capitalism and Alternatives

22 January at 4 pm ET/1 pm PT

In our readings and discussions this week, we will critically examine the role of capitalism in exacerbating our climate crisis and social problems-- issues of ecological devastation, poverty, racism, and dispossession. Our readings will touch on three important concepts that all activists must understand : (1) Capitalism is the root of our social and ecological crisis, (2) capitalism requires the sacrifice of people and place, and (3) socialism provides promising solutions to the issues our generation faces today.

In examining the pitfalls of our current petro-capitalist system, we will then turn to imagined alternatives that may provide a glimpse of the answers to our global climate crisis. Don't be overwhelmed by any terms or seemingly complicated topics! Please just

reach out to fellow students to work through any questions! We are all on the same team :)

***** DISCLAIMER - this week is a tad longer and more complicated, so take some extra time reading through the resources!!**

MATERIALS:

1. Capitalism is the root of our social and ecological crisis:
 - a. [*What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism*](#) by John Belamy Foster and Fred Magdoff
Can our ecological and climate crisis be resolved through technological fixes and tweaks to our current systems? In this article, J.B. Foster and F. Magdoff argue this is not possible and explain the different ways in which capitalism inherently contradicts environmental and social justice.
2. Capitalism requires involuntary sacrifice
 - a. Article/Podcast: [*Let Them Drown: The Violence of Othering in a Warming World*](#) by Naomi Klein
In this talk, Klein highlights how capitalism (which is the root of the climate crisis) is a racist and classist processes that requires the sacrifice of exploited, poor, and non-white persons.
 - b. Podcast: [*Climate Change and Forced Displacement in Honduras with Adriana Laurent*](#) (on Anticonquista)
Comrades Ramiro Fúnez and Adriana Laurent discuss climate change and forced displacement in Honduras. They talk about the impact of Hurricanes Eta and Iota in Nov. 2020 and how they are connected to capitalism and imperialism.
3. Alternatives
 - a. [*Ecosocialism: A Vital Synthesis*](#) by Michael Löwy
Löwy argues that ecosocialism offers a radical alternative that puts social and ecological well-being first. In order to bring about a “Great Transition,” this article offers insight into what socialists and environmentalists must do in unison.
 - b. [*The Rise of the Native Rights-Based Strategic Hope to Save Our Water, Air, and Earth*](#) by Clayton Thomas-Mueller
Clayton Thomas-Mueller discusses the importance of a Native Rights-Based approach to solving the climate crisis-- an approach that centers indigenous communities, creates solidarity across difference and movements, localizes opportunities for self-sufficiency, and utilizes Indigenous rights within the colonial legal system.

WEEK 4: Social Movement Success

29 January at 4 pm ET/1pm PT

It's easy to view environmentalism, particularly climate justice, as a sort of deus ex machina for the various issues that we are facing today. However, in placing all of our trust and hope into one movement, we often forget the movements and leaders that preceded us, as well as the historic pitfalls of environmental activism. Activism cannot succeed in a vacuum, and we must learn from the successes and struggles of previous movements, as well as the mistakes that underlie the foundation of environmentalism to ensure that we bring the full story into every space we find ourselves in. This week focuses on these stories, though not comprehensively, as to do so would require at least a semester. We will discuss the accomplishments of various movements who have laid down the framework for the justice aspect of climate justice, as well as the complicated history that continues to plague environmentalism.

MATERIALS:

1. Environmental Lessons:

[White Environmentalism and the Corporate University](#) by Roshan Krishnan

(4 pages) Concise summary of the ways in which higher education institutions are combating climate change in ways that seek to serve their own capitalist interests.

[The Dark Side of Environmentalism: Ecofascism and Covid-19](#) by Deja Newton

(4 pages) Article exploring the dangers of the “we are the virus” message and its white supremacist roots.

[Intersectional Environmentalism](#) by Leah Thomas

(2 pages) Defines intersectional environmentalism/environmental justice and provides some fantastic examples of groups doing EJ work.

Talk: [Carolyn Finney - Earth Optimism Summit 2017](#)

(12 minutes) Powerful talk by Dr. Carolyn Finney outlining the importance of intersectional environmentalism and her personal experiences as a Black woman in the environmental justice field (Closed captions available).

2. Justice Achievements:

[Just Transition: Learning From the Tactics of Past Labor Movements](#) by Olufemi Taiwo and Dylan Plummer

(4 pages) Article outlining tactics implemented by union organizers and the ways in which climate justice activists can utilize those strategies in this crucial moment.

[Lessons from the Civil Rights Movement: Reflections on the Long Movement for Black Liberation from Atlanta to Amsterdam](#) by Mitchell Esajas

(10 pages) An exploration of anti-Black racism across the United States and Europe and the stories of resistance that followed as a response. (For time, focus on the section *Lessons from the Modern Civil Rights Movement For the #BlackLivesMatter Movement*)

[A Spark of Hope: The Ongoing Lessons of the Zapatista Revolution 25 Years On](#) by Hilary Klein

(6 pages) History and teachings from the wildly successful Zapatista movement.

[How Gay Activists Challenged the Politics of Civility](#) by Sascha Cohen

(3 pages) This article is a little outdated, but it provides an important glimpse into the movement for pride and how it can shape activism today.

Podcast: [Give Me War Music](#) from the Resistance Podcast, hosted by Saidu Tejan-Thomas Jr.

(41 minutes) Interview with NYC John Acosta discussing conflict within organizing circles (transcript available).

WEEK 5: Hope and Solutions

5th of February at 4 pm ET/ 1 pm PT

At the end of this SLAM series and given the multi-layered, complex issues underlying the climate crisis, what can we actually **do** as students and activists? How can the Middlebury community, Vermont, nation, and world reallocate resources, shift perspectives, and develop detailed plans to alter our current situation? This module plans to combine our knowledge of manifestations of the climate crisis, (dis)possessions and isms, capitalism, and social movements to determine how to best organize in the face of adversity and denial. Utilizing current models of climate action plans “gone right,” we will identify next steps moving forward and share inspiring stories about activists shaping a better future for our generation and generations to come.

MATERIALS:

1. Scientific/Mainstream Solutions

[John Kerry, Biden's Climate Czar, Talks About Saving the Planet](#)

Biden's cabinet member discusses the political and social climate in which the government must take action towards solving the climate crisis.

[Natural Solutions to the Climate Crisis](#)

In this avant garde article, a list of natural phenomena and occurrences that we can encourage in nature demonstrates alternative solutions to the climate crisis.

[100 Solutions to Reverse Global Warming | Chad Frischmann](#)

This Ted Talk shows an example of drawdown, which is determining a goal and then mapping and measuring out solutions from there.

2. Leftist/Progressive Solutions

[Climate Solutions: Empowering Women and Indigenous Communities](#)

These solution proposals are shown through a feminist and general human rights activist lens, which is deeply important given how entrenched and intertwined climate change is in these types of activism. These solutions put women and marginalized communities at the forefront of the actions needed to be taken to take on the climate crisis.

[The Fight Against Climate Change is a Fight Against Capitalism](#)

In this article, the author outlines the reasons why fighting climate change must require a shift in systems, away from capitalism. The fight must be anti-racist and supportive of all groups of people.

[Mothers of Invention \(56min\): We May be Small But Our Impact Is Huge](#)

This podcast shows a feminist perspective towards cultivating hope in the face of the existential threat of the climate crisis.

3. Hope and Take Action

[Al Gore: Where I Find Hope](#)

Creator of *An Inconvenient Truth* and avid environmental activist, Al Gore discusses where he finds hope: the Biden administration's rise to power. He discusses why they have the opportunity and means to restore our planet.

[Project Drawdown Table of Solutions](#)

“Drawdown” is “the point in the future when levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere stop climbing and start to steadily decline, thereby stopping catastrophic climate change.” Disclaimer: the creators of this project do not properly represent the needs of marginalized populations. However, it’s worth a look.

[Map of Climate Action Plans by State](#)

This map shows what every state in the U.S. is doing currently or plans to do in the near future regarding climate action. You can investigate whichever state captures your interest, or the state you’re from.

***** *Further exploration for each week below!*

Further Exploration

Did you finish a week absolutely craving more content?? Or a deeper plunge into the ideas and concepts? Well, you're home. This page is dedicated to resources for further exploration! We really wanted to add these materials to the syllabus, but out of concern it would be an overwhelming amount of content, we've decided to include them here. With that, please read through them if you have time. We promise you it'll be worth your time.

WEEK 1: Setting the Scene — Manifestations of the Climate Crisis

[To Cook a Continent](#) by Nnimmo Bassey

[Bad Environmentalism](#) by Nicole Seymour, Introduction pp. 1-38

[Fisherman's Blues](#) by Anna Badkhen

[Environmental Justice in Postwar America](#) by Christopher W. Wells

[Kiribati Climate Refugee Seeks Asylum in New Zealand](#) by Hannah Osbourne

[Coronavirus and Climate Change](#) with Dr. Aaron Bernstein

[Environmental Justice](#) by Paul Mohai, David Pellow, and J. Timmons Roberts

[Podcast: The Unusual Relationship Between Climate and Pandemics](#) by Lauren Lipuma

WEEK 2: (Dis)Possessions and Isms

[Invisible Climate Wars, Part I: Climate Disruption as Gender Violence](#) by Alice Cherry

[Invisible Climate Wars, Part II: Climate Disruption as Racial Violence](#) by Alice Cherry

[Theory of Capitalism](#) (outlined by Columbia University)

WEEK 3: Critiques of Capitalism and Alternatives

[This Changes Everything](#) by Naomi Klein, Introduction pgs. 1-28

[Flint, Environmental Racism, and Racial Capitalism](#) by Laura Pulido (!!!)

[Modern US Racial Capitalism: Some Theoretical Insights](#) by Charice Burden-Stelly (!!!)

[Capitalism and Robbery](#) by John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Hannah Holleman (!!!)

[Marxism and Ecology: Common Fronts of a Great Transition](#) by John Bellamy Foster

[Five Principles of a Socialist Climate Politics](#) by Matt Huber

[A Message From The Future with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez](#) from The Leap and The Intercept

[A Message From The Future II: The Years of Repair](#) from the Leap and The Intercept

WEEK 4: Social Movement Success

[Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience](#) by Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier

[The Difference Between Ecofeminism & Intersectional Environmentalism](#) by Leah Thomas

[How Afrofuturism Can Help the World Mend](#) by C. Brandon Ogbunu

[Ask a Feminist: A Conversation with Cathy Cohen on Black Lives Matter, Feminism, and Contemporary Activism](#) with Cathy Cohen by Sarah Jackson

[Lessons from African Feminists Mobilizing Against COVID-19](#) by Meredith Forsyth

[Black Feminism](#) by Black History in Two Minutes (Check out their other videos too!)

[Why White Supremacists are Hooked on Green Living](#) by Sam Adler-Bell

WEEK 5: Hope and Solutions

[Inhabiting the Anthropocene Back Loop by Stephanie Wakefield \(2018\)](#)

[NASA: Responding to Climate Change](#)

NASA discusses their stance on climate change and solutions to the crisis. This brief overview of the steps this organization views as necessary gives us an inside peek into what these scientists think will alter the current climate trajectory we are on.

[An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power: Your Action Handbook to Learn the Science, Find Your Voice, and Help Solve the Climate Crisis](#), by Al Gore

[Atmosphere of Hope: Searching for Solutions to Climate Change](#), by Tim Flannery

[Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience, and the Fight for a Sustainable Future](#), by Mary Robinson

[Truth to Power](#)

[Lessons from Bhutan: Gross National Happiness | Tshering Tobgay](#)

This video doesn't have to be watched in full. Tobgay discusses how we can learn from the kingdom of Bhutan regarding happiness over economic growth and dealing with the heavy burden of climate change through environmental preservation.

[How to Save a Planet \(45min\): European Solutions and What We Can Learn From Them](#)

[Kiss the Ground](#), on Netflix

[A Climate Change Solution That's Right Under Our Feet | Asmeret Asefaw Berhe](#)

Berhe identifies a climate change solution that has long been taken for granted and placed on the back burner of possible solutions to the crisis we are facing: soil. She discusses how and why this simple natural factor can pull us out of the deep trouble we are currently experiencing.